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Critical Cultural Analysis of a Midwestern State Green Party

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Opinion Paper

Abstract: *In this paper, I render the organizational practices of an American state green party. These practices are discussed not from the perspective of organizational theory, but from the perspective of critical cultural analysis. I attempt to construct a green cosmology, into which I situate the party's practices when contextualizing them, in order to indicate how ideology influences green organizational behaviors. In the ethnographic accounts, I interpose analyses; sometimes comparing the greens to larger discursive structures. I make the case that the green worldview is immured in the same premises and implicit assumptions that structure other American political forms. These commonalities result in the same methodological prescriptions for political praxis. Therefore, to a significant degree, the greens conform to the system that they are consciously working to alter. By largely submitting to the processes of the political system that they seek to change, greens are disposed to become the very political structure that they reflexively focus on as the target demanding their interdiction in an attempt to engender its alteration.*

Keywords: *Causes of Immigration, language and education, Africa, United States*

Introduction

When I initially set out to perform the research associated with this study, I had planned to conduct participant-observation upon a Midwestern state green party. Additionally, I conceived of my research design as Grounded Theory: An approach common to sociological ethnographies that strives to identify concepts and categories using an inductivist approach, which eventually crystallize into conceptualizations representing a pattern of social behavior. This form of analysis generates an empirically grounded theory, as opposed to theories produced from armchair speculation (Glaser & Strauss, 2009).

In order to infiltrate the greens, I joined a county local in a Midwestern state party, which entailed obligatory membership in the state party. The first few weeks of my membership in the state and local organization consisted of email correspondences, because I was living in New York, at the time, where I attended graduate school. Despite geographical barriers, I found that I could participate in the party forums; at least those forums that were accessible to members of the party who failed to possess elevated statuses. The party leadership dominated the preponderance of dialog so much of my engagement was with the leaders of the state party.

I made a point to peruse the topics members had posted on a daily basis. When I detected a thread that concerned policy or strategy, I would participate. Due to the time that I invested in these activities, I gained the recognition of at least one prominent Green Party member, who lived in a neighboring state but audited, nevertheless, the state party I had joined. He began to contact me offering political advice on an intermittent basis. On one occasion, I recall posting an apology on the party forums, because I had delivered a strongly worded message. Soon after, he sent me an e-mail advising me never to apologize for anything. Instead, he said, "…just move on." The point he was making was that apologizing merely prolonged the issue; consequently, illuminating the mishap so that it continued to remain in people's contemplations. It is better to introduce a new issue, rather than encouraging people to fixate on what has already gone wrong.

After I moved to back to the Midwest, I procured the position of bylaws chair. The party did not decide who would assume the position by a popular election. Instead, the executive committee members were responsible for nominating and ratifying who would become its incumbent. The chair of my local, who sat on the committee, had offered to nominate me, and I accepted. During the deliberations held prior to the vote for ratification, participants in the deliberations, who were already on the bylaws committee, voiced opposition to my candidacy. Apparently, I was the first person to be nominated for the position. Their opposition to my

ratification was justified by their insistence that there was no purpose to having a chair to the bylaws committee because it had operated successfully without any such leadership. In my own private assessment, they were right.

My engagement in the organization was a tumultuous affair. I attribute many of my difficulties to the education I had received in sociology. In short, a Weberian ideology encumbered my interpretations, leading me to idealize the structure of the organization as though it were an ideal type analyzable as legitimate codes dictating appropriate organizational processes. I recognize the fact that Weber subscribed to nominalist positivism. As an anti-realist, he did not grant ontological status to his posits, or ideal types. Rather, he considered these abstract constructs intellectual devices instrumental in the production of parsimonious analysis. I later concluded that collective behavior should not be reduced to ideal types. It leads one to make normative assumptions regarding legitimate versus illegitimate behavior that are not necessarily empirically grounded.

Background to Green Party

The Green Party USA, according to its own account of its historicity, was formed into a national political party in 1996 (GPUSA, 2004), during which time it was referred to as the Association of State Green Parties, (ASGP). It was originally compiled from a convergence of state green parties that had existed, prior to the ASGP, independently from one another, lacking a substantial, overarching organization through which they could coordinate their projects and advocacies on a national level (Hawkins, Ed., 2006). Beginning in 2001, the party was nationally registered as the Green Party USA. In addition to amalgamating the state green parties into a national entity, the ASGP and then the Green Party USA affiliated itself, loosely, with other national green parties that had developed around the world; most notably in Germany.

The green organizations, including the ASGP and the Green Party USA, and the relationships that they formed with one another constitute a rather complicated history. One theme

that has been noted upon in the literature (Hawkins, Ed., 2006; Lucardie & Rihoux, 2008) is the authoritarian, corporatist, and undemocratic natures of many of these organizations and of the Green Party USA, itself. The 2004 national convention highlighted the schism between the Green Party's rhetoric pertaining to its democratic reform agenda and its own internal decision-making practices (Miller & Hill, 2005; Hawkins, Ed., 2006). Rather than allowing the entire membership of the Green Party USA to vote in order to decide whom the party would nominate as its presidential candidate – an election where there would be, "One person, one vote" – the preponderance of the decision-making was allocated to a minority of delegates, representing state green parties. As Miller and Hill point out, only a small percentage of Green Party members were actually afforded the ability to directly vote for one of the candidates running in the primary election:

> In DC Cobb received 37% of all votes cast. The total number of votes cast in the Washington DC primary, including write-in votes, was 374. Cobb faced only one local opponent, yet received only 138 votes. In the Rhode Island primary, the one state where Cobb actually won more than 50% of the vote, only 89 votes were cast. The primary ballot only included Kent Mesplay and Cobb. It did not even include New York's presidential nominee Lorna Salzman. The vote was 71 for Cobb and 18 for Mesplay. Overall, the total primary vote for candidates who supported Nader/Camejo was over 83% compared to Cobb's 12.2%. Where Greens actually were able to vote, Cobb was roundly defeated.
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> In all other states Green Party delegates were chosen at nominating meetings. These meetings varied in size but were overall quite small. The national Green Party web site never reported the number of votes cast at any of the state nominating meetings. This coverup, whether intentional or not, hid from Greens the small

> number of voters that was determining how large numbers of delegates were proportioned between the candidates (2005).

The elitism demonstrable in the 2004 primary election is indicative of a thematic property that runs throughout the preponderance of green party organizational activities. Despite their reputation as democratic reformers, the greens are deferential to hierarchy; a disposition that is exhibited by their SMO. The greens, by and large, fail to practice forms of radical democracy when engaged in their organizational decision-making processes; instead, preferring to structure their organization so that it possesses an internal deliberative engine – a control-and-command-center that is occupied and operated by party elites.

The authoritarian dimensions of green culture were evident in the state party in which I participated. They were most clearly exemplified by the actions of the un/official party leader, who had played a critical role in the development of the organization. The state party had existed in some nominal form, preceding the Nader Campaign of 2000, after which the leader – in this context, a green political operative, who had been an influential Green Party member in a neighboring state – capitalized off Nader's popularity. He infiltrated the state party and organized its local green members. These interventions led to the establishment of the state green party in its modern form. Although this account sounds dubious – as though it is a creation mythology with a protagonist who possesses hero-like qualities – I am inclined to interpret the narrative as historically accurate.

From my dealings with the protagonist of the story, he appeared to be both the informal and the formal leader of the organization. His leadership was formal in the respect that he was elected as the chair of the state party in addition to assuming positions on the coordinating committee, the executive committee, and as the Internet forum moderator. He took on the attributes of an informal leader in that his powers transcended the particular offices that he held. He acted, oftentimes, as a soft authoritarian; a capacity that other members of the party failed to resist. He often made decisions and stood by them with no willingness to negotiate or compromise. With only one exception, he never appeared

as though he intentionally intimidated other members through recourse to political threats. Furthermore, from what I could observe, he did not exercise unseemly influence over organizational processes in an attempt to promote his own self-interests. Nevertheless, he was seen as knowledgeable and in charge, and members often deferred to his judgment during deliberations concerning party policy. This relationship of dependency took on a paternalistic character, revealing an underlying assumption held by the preponderance of the party membership: The party should assume a form resembling other conventional political structures in American society. This form, which can be referred to as Pluralism, involves a social hierarchy in which elites, who provide representativeness to groups and factions, are endowed with the decision-making authority for purposes of constructing policy.

Green Party Literature and Practice

If one peruses the literature that has been rendered public by the Green Party over the years (GPUSA, 2001), he or she will find articulations enunciating democratic sentiments (GPUSA, 2001). The internal organization of the party, according to the literature, is intended to be radically democratized (ILGP, 2008). In terms of the state party, when deciding on the adoption of a policy affecting the bylaws or platform of the party, the primary decision-making vehicle – at the time of my participation – was a consensus-building dialogue, in which all members of the organization were encouraged to participate. If a consensus could not be reached, certain procedures would close the debate in order for there to be a referendum. The decision-making processes embodied a bottom-to-top form of legitimization. Accordingly, the most powerful and affecting segment of the organization was intended to be the general, undifferentiated membership, not an elected chair, or an appointed steering committee. The greens not only publicly articulated polemics in favor of grass-roots democracy; they assumed

such a political organization in their own internal deliberations. At least, this is what the literature suggested. Further, the members of the state party often responded affirmatively when I asked them if they supported participatory democracy in the party organization. For the most part, the members appeared to agree that such a model was desirable. This value appeared to be additionally extensible to considerations consisting of matters outside of party procedures. It was generally consented upon that America needed to be reformed in order for it to possess a more participatory democratic sociopolitical framework.

Understanding how political values shape social behaviors requires the translation of the value's articulation into the form it takes on in concrete praxes: what amounts to the operational definitions: how definitions are used. Otherwise, one might fail to interpret their semantic attributions in a mode that reflects the meanings with which they are endowed by the people who use them. Therefore, when coming to understand the Green Party and its values, it is best to approach the endeavor by relying upon empirical observations of the actualization of such values in concrete practices.

The party had installed what was termed a "coordinating committee," whose decision-making power preempted the other committees. The coordinating committee also selected, according to internal committee election, members of its body that would serve on its executive committee: The body charged with carrying out the day-to-day administrative work of the coordinating committee. The preponderance of decisions made by the executive committee could eventually be rescinded by the coordinating committee during one of its several meetings throughout the year. None of the coordinating committee members were elected through state party-wide election, but, rather, ascended to such positions through elections conducted by the party locals. Coordinating committee officials were, in part, responsible for offering representation to the locals who had installed them into their coordinating committee seats. However, it was generally understood that they were primarily responsible for acting in the interests of the party as a whole. As bylaws chair, I interpreted the internal practices of the party as failing to exhibit the behaviors that one would

associate with a grass-roots democratic organization. Rather, the party had acquired a structure that allocated much of the decision-making authority to different committees that were charged with performing various functions for the party. Furthermore, there were elected officials who held offices in the state green party. These capacities were, of course, available to any member of the party who could win an inner-party election. However, more times than not, the positions belonged to individuals who were describable as party bosses. They did not necessarily manipulate party processes in order to maintain power. Rather, their continuation as leaders within the party appeared to be more the product of deficits in confidence possessed by the regular members of the association. Therefore, it would not be justified to assert that the grass-roots democracy that had been alluded to in party literature was necessarily corrupted and thwarted by a faction that desired to assume and persist as an elite ruling class. In fact, I cannot assuredly assert that there ever was a collection of green organizations practicing grass-roots democracy.

When working as a participant in the state party that I had infiltrated, I felt a tension: It seemed more practicable, efficient, to have a group of elites who could move the organization in beneficial directions, making the decisions. I would later come to realize that such a conceptualization was premised upon the principle that decision-making had to be centralized, as if an organization was a body that needed to have a mind. It was this "…Ghost in the Machine," that needed to be exercised (Ryle, 1949).

American Ideology of Pluralism

The greens are immured in the cultural-politico prejudices of Pluralism*:* A theoretical system intended to represent the institutions and processes forming the American political structure; a sociopolitical morphology that counterrevolutionaries in the American Academe defend as a desirable alternative to competing political models, such as

Marxism. Robert Dahl (1971), introduced the term, "Polyarchy," designating the American political condition, which he characterized as a collection of diverse groups with divergent interests that compete with one another in order to advance their agenda through public policy. No single group is completely dominant, and all groups have some impact upon the construction of public policy.

It is the elites belonging to the respective groups, with whom they share group interests, which provide representativeness to their fellow members. Therefore, the elites contest, collude, and negotiate with one another – interactions occurring within institutional corridors that are often left publicly opaque – in a collective orchestration of governance. During this affair, elites purportedly further the interests of the various identities that they embody. The people, who have little say in matters related to public policy, must trust that their interests are, indeed, advocated by the social elites with whom they share affiliations; identities whose members commune with varying degrees of solidarity, but all manage to elevate a capable few of their kind to positions of societal importance and influence, where they can be impactful.

According to the mainstream of American political theory, this Pluralism is an advanced human condition. It is the result of the maturation of the American sociopolitical formation; the growth of a political system that is embodied by a society that has enlarged to dimensions in which it is no longer possible to conduct any form of direct democracy. Such an evolution is, in fact, a positive development, because democracy itself is paradoxically a vehicle for tyranny. The intellectual founder of Pluralism, James Madison (2001) made the case in *The Federalist Papers*: Democracy would inevitably entail the hegemony of a single faction that would come to control the political fixtures of a society. Only through geographical and social diversification – in addition to representative elites, who would intermediate conflicting interests by virtue of their moderating temperance – could any semblance of democracy be preserved. In order for democracy to be salvaged, it had to be compromised to its near paralysis. To quote Lenin, "It is true that liberty is precious - so precious that it must be rationed."

American democracy, if one is to treat history with deference, met its demise with the defeat of the anti-Federalists; an

event that resulted in the ratification of the Constitution. As Dana Nelson (2008) makes clear in *Bad for Democracy: how the Presidency undermines the power of the People*, it is executive powers, which served as a catalyst effecting an evolutionary trajectory that resulted in a departure of American sociopolitical aggregates from traditions of more robust forms of democracy. For purposes of this paper, the matter of salience to be extracted from this contrarian accounts can be expressed as follows. Interpretations of our sociopolitical conditions should not be premised upon the unsalable compound propositions: America is a democracy; or America possesses a democratic kernel that can be expanded and enhanced; or America is moving along a trajectory destined toward an ever-increasing democratic fulfillment. At one point in time, there was a democratic ethos that struggled for its preservation. However, the bands of democrats never organized or consolidated their resources in a manner that was even approachable to their adversary. American democracy was decimated by Federalism. The men and women contributing to the end of colonialism and monarchy had their revolution betrayed by a political faction propelled and shaped by manufacturing interests in addition to paternalistic dispositions.

America, from its inception as a constitutional republic, was propelled along a counterrevolutionary course that has incrementally edged toward the Bush Presidency. Bush's sociopolitical ideology epitomized the counterrevolutionary authoritarianism that has consistently prevailed over the American people: Who have struggled under many banners; that erupted and forced to the surface societal conflicts; who have won successions from elites in different forms and varying degrees of ostentation; but who have ultimately failed to mobilize in any sustained and strategically effectual modality. These uprisings and revolts take on new significations – different from their conventional interpretations – when they are conceptually liberated from the prevailing ideology insisting that America is somehow, underneath it all, a democratic society; that America is destined toward betterment: the idealization of a good life defined as democratic.

Pluralism is demonstrative of an interpretive pattern. According to the principles forming this type of thinking, sociopolitical accomplishments – victories on the part of the people – are integrated into the overarching narrative often termed as "Whiggish history." In this framework, their values are compounded and multiplied, due to the analytical forging of interrelations among them, making each historical event appear more salient because it is conceptually supported by other incidents that are defined as ancillary, as if each incident contributes to its successors. This is the deceptive mechanism at work within the rhetoric: Things are always improving; or they have improved; or they are destined to improve. If we view these events independently, however, their values are drastically adjusted. For instance, the People's Party, which was the culmination of the American Agrarian Revolt (Goodwyn, 1978), was a fleeting movement. The Populist Party disintegrated organizationally. The only historical generalization to be inferred from the populist movement is the sociopolitical function assumed by the Democratic Party, which has always operated as a flood channel taking in streams of mobilization during periods of popular discontent. The Democratic Party then redirects radical elements back into the countervailing superficial tensions forming the stasis of the two-party system.

Of course, under Whiggish pretenses, The People's Party gave fuel to what would become the Reform Era of the early 20th century; or what can be roughly conflated with the Progressive Movement; what we are told to have consisted of social reforms, demanding compliance by plutocrats, freeing the resources necessary for the beginnings of a social welfare infrastructure. In spite of Whiggishness, there is a different story to be told; one that detaches the Progressive Era from its conventional positioning within a continuum where it is preceded by Populism and followed by the New Deal. Progressive ranks were filled with eugenicists and Platonic proto-fascists (Goldberg, 2007), who took it upon themselves to deconstruct the vestiges of local political autonomy that had been the possession of the people. This Localism often translated into systems of patronage, providing uniquely devised forms of social welfare (Disch 2002). The local autonomy could assume the form of customs and rituals

through which people policed themselves and resolved their own conflicts through their own indigenous juridical institutions and arrangements. Progressivism was not an emancipation of people from the tyranny of wealth and their own inwardness; it was the expansion of a centralized system of governance; the consolidation of power by a growing locus of authority. In this respect, Progressives were sociopolitically disposed in a fashion akin to the Federalists.

Perhaps, Progressivism does bare relation to the New Deal: A time when Mussolini was popularly perceived and often the positive reference in the discussions undertaken among governing elites. Indeed, Roosevelt, at the time of his inauguration, was largely expected to swell executive powers to the point that Congress would be pushed to political impotency. Legislation would be established through presidential edict, as opposed to the parliamentary procedures organizing the congressional bodies (Goldberg, 2007). In terms of the successors to Franklin Roosevelt, this elitist ideology became the "Mandarin Syndrome," whose symptoms were particularly pronounced, according to Chomsky (2005) in the Harvard-exclusive Kennedy Administration.

To lodge another wedge in the master-narrative we have been conditioned to internalize and actualize as the interpretive lens through which we filter events, nothing is more prescient than what social trends and prospects presently loom. After all, of the supposedly interconnected advancements, our current sociopolitical condition can, nevertheless, be characterized by its gross and advancing schism – a divide between the institutions responsible for the construction of social policies and the deliberative involvement of the people. To frame this trend in rhetorically positive terminology, the Whig would insist that society has entered into a state where power is allocated according to expertise and technocratic competency. The distribution of labor has advanced to the point where our social relationships are so complex that they can only be managed by a group of professionals; a ruling class fashioned not with gold but with the status symbols afforded from modern research universities and think-tanks; what Daniel Bell

(1973) referenced as "technocracy." Technocracy is premised upon the same assumption that acts as the foundation for Pluralism: Elites are inherently disposed to provide representativeness to the groups with whom they affiliate.
Intellectual adherence to a prevailing theory was put into interesting terms by the philosopher, Lakatos (1984). He termed the tenets of the belief system as core principles. They are infallible, providing a consistent framework within which one can tinker and adjust corollaries and subsidiaries in an ongoing attempt to account for inconsistencies between theory and empirical observation. The core, however, apart from occasions where there are reports of particularly pronounced empirical anomalies, will remain unchallenged, as though it is unconscious, and it will continue to provide bedrock upon which scientific refinement can be erected. It is the notion of representativeness that is lodged as the core underneath Pluralist Thought.

Pluralism and Green Ideology

The green ideology resides within this overarching pattern of interpretation. Green members rarely express conceptualizations that transcend Pluralism and representativeness. Rather than an alternative intellectual framework, under which an actor can apprehend normatively appropriate political process in qualitative contrast to what predominates, the greens seem merely content upon tinkering within the parameters established by American Pluralism. It is the submission to the logic and processes of Pluralism that amounts to the paradoxical existence of the greens. They endeavor to become that which they are defined in opposition. The state party, of which I was a member, was, perhaps, more conservative than the New York or the California Green parties, but its practices were aligned to near conformity with the normative system organizing the powers that they desired to challenge. It always appeared as though they were in vocal protest while remaining in implicit endorsement. Campaign reform would be sought through the device of campaigning, and the reforms were predicated upon the ultimate preservation of the campaign process.

This matter has a practical dimension as well. The greens are, de facto, consenting to institutional processes that have been established for the purposes of allowing social groups such as the greens to exist, but these groups never possess enough chips needed for effectively waiting out one, or for that matter, consecutive hands at the seven-card-draw. Resources are expended attempting to gain entry on ballots. If a slot on the ballot is obtained, then there are sparse resources remaining to apply toward actual campaigning. One exception was the state party boss. He was well versed in mechanics of state politics. However, his political outfit had little chance of ever winning the state representative position to which he electorally aspired. He amassed the support necessary to gain automatic entry on the ballot; something acquiring approximately 6% of the vote. However, his district encompassed a large university from which he drew student support.

Politics 1.0: Pluralism and the Political Economy

The expression, "Politics 1.0," is intended to designate instances of political activity that embody precepts and habits underlying the political culture endemic to contemporary America. This sociopolitical epoch exhibits, as its core feature, a mass consumerist „democratic" ethic: The citizen is conceived as a consumer, who is presented with selections during the electoral process, for whom the citizen can cast a vote; an act analogous to the selection and purchase of a product brand by a consumer. This framework for democratic participation mirrors the logic underlying the free-market. Individuals and collectives can initiate political projects, leveraging whatever resources they have accessible, which are then used to market the political package to the voting public.

Although this is beginning to change as a result of Internet diffusion, political messages, which circulate throughout society, are distributed according to the dynamics organizing broadcast. Broadcasting entails an asymmetrical structure dictating the flow of communications. The few can speak to the many, but the many are left incommunicado, unable to

utilize broadcasting to disseminate their own messages. Instead, the overwhelming majority of the public, when participating in politics, find themselves limited to a singular form of expression: A speech-act referred to as the vote, whereby members of the public can express favor for specific politicians and the policies they champion.

Pluralists would argue that in addition to elected officials there are multiplicities of NGOs, which advance the interests of the various sections differentiating members of the population. American political scientists consider these groups to be a crucial component of a functioning "democratic" nation-state because the expertise that these groups amass, in the policy arenas in which they specialize, provide valuable knowledge repositories that can be drawn from during the construction of legislation. Depending upon the political capital that a special interest group accumulates, it can expect to be a participant in the negotiations that are waged by congressional members working to arrive at compromises that can attract the support necessary for the bill's passage.

Pluralism, Broadcast, and Internet Communications

There are a number of factors contributing to the institutionalization of the asymmetry structuring American mass media. The most notable antecedent to this condition is the technology itself. Messages formatted for broadcast are restrictively expensive to generate. In the case of television, an agent needs to purchase airtime from a station; not to mention the expenses associated with the actual production of the message to be broadcast. One cannot bypass the networks monopolizing television, because the „publicly" owned finite broadcasting spectrum is enclosed, excluding those not furnished with the necessary FCC credentials. (This, of course, has changed with the establishment of cable and satellite television. Nevertheless, an actor must still purchase airtime from cable networks).

This is not to argue technological determinism. Rather, this feature is referenced in order to illumine a condition that Pluralism – in its defense of Politics 1.0 – has failed to acknowledge in any substantive way. Nevertheless, whether

implicitly or rudimentarily articulated, it bolstered Pluralism's credence because it made it seem inevitable. This is the reason for the new boogeyman, "cyberpopulism" (Netanel, 2000) – a new ideological antagonist, largely the conceptual creation of Pluralists. In short, to maintain the sociopolitical order, Politics 1.0, Pluralism has been forced to adapt its rhetoric in order to address the contingencies presented by the Internet and its decentralized means for communication. A by-product of this rhetoric is an accusation leveled against cyberpopulists for neglecting to account for the beneficial roles performed by the deliberative legislative bodies in addition to NGOs, both of which contribute to American Pluralism. This complaint is tied to the criticism that cyberpopulism overestimates the abilities of ordinary citizens to parse through the gluttony of information made available by the Internet when the masses try to make sense out of public issues. Pursuant to this claim, Pluralists contend that there is a need for intermediaries, such as NGOs, to stand between flows of information, stemming from governmental activity, and the citizenry.

Supressing the Internet's Democratic Possibilities

The Internet, most saliently, is dynamic in both content and form. It should not be conceptualized as simply another medium for communication, but, instead, as a de-centered apparatus in which media converge (Jenkins, 2006). This is an important feature because it allows for the inexpensive generation of contents in addition to their inexpensive distribution. The message can be distributed to endpoints, consisting of interlocutors interfacing with different digital technologies. This allows for the easy disbursement of messages to a mass audience; members of whom might be connected with one another through the availability of divergent technological constructs that can render the same messages, albeit according to varying formatting; whether it is, for instance, an e-book, a website, or an audio book.

Media convergence provides convenience for the end-user, who desires to become a content creator, because he or she can propagate a message, sending it to his or her counterparts comprising his or her social networking, relatively effortlessly and without the prohibitive consumption of resources. This is because the different media are reducible to digital binary. Programming languages, in their most primitive form, all consist of machine code: 1"s and 0"s. Since all digital media share binary coding as the basis upon which their higher-order linguistic constructs are assembled, they can be encoded from one digital language to another through precisely duplicable algorithmic models. This results in an inexpensive, expedited conversion, making the act of publication accessible to masses.

Broadcasting, in contrast, does not facilitate media convergence. Therefore, it is more difficult to propagate a message by converting it to multiple formats. Analogue, as a means for multi-stream publication, not only degrades quality, it is tedious. This results from the work of translating the contents from one medium to another; a task that must be achieved in the absence of a common language that can be reduced from different forms of analogue transmissions.

Dissident Voices

Pluralism and Politics 1.0 do not exist in a vacuum. Other discourses have produced alternative conceptualizations of democracy. One such competitor prescribes a political ordering that operates with a kernel consisting of consensus-building deliberations that are achieved through public dialogue. Habermas (1989), who is probably the most recognizable figure to advocate a democratic theory that enumerates such qualities, contradicting many of the premises underlying Pluralism and, for that matter, liberal democracy, maintains that all members of society possess the intellectual faculties required to engage in rational deliberations over public policy.

Habermas (1984) proffers a definition of rationality that departs quite significantly from conventional understandings of the concept. According to Habermas, rationality is not a system of thought demonstrable in the cognitions belonging

to monadic agents. Rather, it is a form of sociability that is structured according to basic principles that Habermas enunciates; i.e., the distribution of publicity must be egalitarian, allowing for members to coequally address one another. Therefore, rational contributions are not contingent upon individual faculties. That is, it is not a matter so much of making sure that the best people are making decisions; instead, it is the social conditions under which the dialogue is committed that determines the validity of the decisions that are arrived at by the political public.

Unlike the scenario associated with the politics depicted by Habermas, Pluralism does not provision for the participation of the citizenry during the formative processes out of which public policy is forged. This is not to say that theorists, such as Rawls[i] (1993), who maintained a commitment to Kant's notion of Practical Reasoning (Kant, 2008) did not incorporate into their models an insistence upon a forum for public debate over pertinent social issues; a type of intellectual stimulation that would aid citizens in making informed choices when voting, so that their selections for a candidate would be based upon a more informed and lucid understanding of the voter's interests as well as which candidate would better advocate those interests.

Rawls‟ argument, however, is deceptive. He masks his underlying elitism with Practical Reasoning. However, to note, there continues to be a schism between governance and the people. Kant's system of deliberateness entailed directness. Rawls, instead, deferred to elected officials. It is in respect to this elitism that Rawls is connectible to Pluralism. Therefore, the democratic model proposed by Rawls and many of his 20th century contemporaries continued to embody the consumerist ethic: The people vote for the best packaged politic available on the ballot.

Green Party's use of the Internet

Despite the availability of Habermas as a dissident voice, the greens that I observed do not consider this model to be a viable option. It might find representation in some green

literature, but the practices and practical decision-making undertaken by the greens does not conform to this alternative conceptualization of political praxis. What is striking about the green failure to embrace a deliberative and direct democracy – in their internal praxes – is that the instruments to overcome practicable obstructions are right in front of them. It is the Internet and its possibilities for facilitating existential change that the greens have failed to seize upon in a substantive way. The greens have Internet forums in which they conduct some business, but the forums are modeled according to a schema that manifests the same hierarchical corporate organization that we see in other forms of polity. For instance, the state greens have their equivalent to a steering committee – what they refer to as a coordinating committee – embodying a managerial class that dominates the internal affairs of the organization.

The existence of a managerial class controlling the organizational practices of the greens is additionally evidenced by the presence of a forum administrator. The administrator is equipped with a variety of read and writes delegations. Therefore, the administrator can selectively extend permissions to various members of the forum, thus limiting who can post topic starters or responses to topics that have already been published. It should also be noted that the members of the forum – even those with no elevated status – could activate or deactivate various features, specifying the way in which the he or she interfaces with the forum. One can select, for instance, whether to receive e-mail notifications every time a message is posted. However, if the end-user does not want to be bombarded with automated e-mails that are sent after every posting, he or she can elect to receive a bulk e-mail once daily, or once weekly. Further, the forum end-user can typically select the personal information that he or she will make available to other members of the forum. However, the forum administrator can limit the available specificities that can be tailored by the end-user.

Subgroups within the forum can be created, and the membership of such divisions can be further restricted by the administrator. The generation of such subgroups was essential for the establishment of an online venue that could model the actual organization of the party. Committees that

comprise the Green Party can use sub-forums in order to transact their business. The state greens did have a forum in which the general membership of the party could participate. The forum consisted of two subdivisions; one of which was designated for any announcements that were related to events and affairs not directly associated with the party, itself; the other of which involved a representational space intended for postings directly related to party affairs.
In addition to two spaces in which any member of the party can participate, through posting topics and responses to the contents published by other participants, there were sub-forums intended to facilitate communications among members of committees. These spaces were often restricted to individuals who had specified statuses within the party. For instance, the coordinating committee forum was limited to coordinating committee members, officers of the party, and the bylaws chair. Only those with special privileges could access the postings and responses deposited by the coordinating committee members during the course of their internal deliberations. In other words, the contents of the forums were intentionally left opaque to the preponderance of the party membership. According to my assessment, this practice was instituted so that coordinating committee members could better manage the impression they projected to the ordinary people of the organization.

Comittee Practices

For the most part, the rules of conduct, organizing each committee's internal interactions, were not formally encoded. They were not inscribed into the bylaws belonging to the organization. Rather, they qualified as standing rules. Therefore, they were positioned at the bottom of an analytical hierarchy determining which organizational codes supersede other codes. For instance, if an organization possesses a charter – which serves as a constitution – and has further specified its procedures by constructing bylaws, the principles embedded in the constitution would supersede in authority the rules enacted in the form of bylaw legislation. Extending this logic to the next step, the standing rules can only exist as long as they do not

contradict the higher order principles, which are expressed in the bylaws or in a constitution, prescribing appropriate organizational conduct.

Therefore, state party bylaws, to extrapolate from preceding descriptions, conform to an information type architecture that embodies a centralized, hierarchical systemization into which the information types are integrated and interrelated. It is this organizational design that informs individuals and committees as to how they should structure their interplay. The decisions affecting the organization are almost entirely rendered by the coordinating committee or the executive committee. In fact, each of the lower-level committees are required to possess at least one coordinating committee member, so that the he or she can directly observe the lower-level committee practices and ensure that it is correctly carrying out the commands that are issued to it by the executive committee or the coordinating committee.

The Green Party describes itself as an organization that self-governs through the practice of grass-roots democracy: a form of reckoning that endows the basic membership of the party with direct and preemptive legislative authorities. However, in practice, this authority is rarely invoked. This is due, partially, to the fact that the membership of the party only convenes once or twice a year during party conventions. In addition, according to the constitutional structure of the party, it is only during these physical convergences that bylaws can be modified.

Apart from these annual or semiannual events, the party organization lacks a forum in which the membership can assemble in person, in order for it to perform the dialogic processes through which it enacts legislation. This has practical failings. Greens cannot organizationally adapt as quickly as necessary, and contingencies are not effectively managed or advantageously exploited. At one point, I suggested that the party engage entirely in civic advocacy and patronage. An example would be the establishment of credit cooperatives and consumer unions that could leverage and effectively negotiate with the interests forming the supply side. However, the management of the party was disinclined, and direct legislation was impractical, due to the logistical problems associated with the organization of party conventions.

As compensatory for the inability to legislate rapidly, coordinating and executive committee members in the party were not strongly beholden to the bylaws. The party boss, for instance, to whom I have already referred, served as the chair of the party. He additionally assumed other elevated statuses with the party, such as Internet moderator: a position that was never actually provisioned in the bylaws. When moderating the Internet forums, his decisions often possessed legislative entailments, declaring what speech was permissible versus speech that should be sanctioned. Such decisions were based upon principles that were never legislatively enacted according to the appropriate processes: Again, legislative adjustments to the bylaws, in theory, were only to be enacted by the party membership.

Conclusion

The Green Party conceives of itself according to an organizational architecture that resembles the traditional configuration of corporate-structure belonging to the business model of the economy. This form of social organization is premised upon the following principle: In order for collective behavior to function in a way that is coherent and purposeful, it must be centralized so that an executive can coordinate the activities of all of the organization's constituent parts. We can conflate the executive of an organization with the central nervous system of an organism: It is this system-command-and-control that manages all of the components that collectively constitute the organism. It is the deliberativeness of the sys-tem-command that formulates the plans through which projects are attempted and – under felicitous circumstances – brought to a completion. Additionally, it is endowed with a corrective function, the system-control, which reacts to processional breakdowns in order to realign the system's parts, reestablishing sequences of events, or processes, collectively constituting the system.

The Order of Things

When attempting to come to terms with the Green Party's inclination to emulate the very sociopolitical organizations that it was striving to displace, I asked members whether it was strategically sound to attempt, "…to beat them at their own game." By this, I was questioning whether it was wise to organize and coordinate collective behaviors in a modality that paralleled the two national parties in addition to whether it was even fruitful to compete in the state's electoral system.

In respect to the former of the two sub-queries, I was implying that Green Party's status as an insurgent might necessitate the use of untraditional political methods in order to overcome the hurdles that were referenced in the latter sub-query. (One must be mindful of the fact that the state electoral systems are structured by statutes instituted by Democratic and Republican controlled legislatures (Disch, 2002). The two national parties have restricted ballot access in states in order to consolidated powers and push third-parties to the margins).

The latter sub-query implied that it might be more advantageous to attempt to enact social reforms through activities in civil society that were not directly political. When I proposed that the party should attempt to create a credit union as well as a consumer union, neither of my suggestions was taken seriously by the party members with whom I shared my suggestions. In response, one member stated that the state green Party was a political organization and should engage in electoral politics. If people were interested in the advocacies that I suggested, they should join other types of organizations.

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[i] Rawls is typically considered to have argued for a political structure that is referenced as liberal democracy. However, both liberal democracy and Pluralism embody the principle of representativeness, which they use to legitimate the sociopolitical stratification distinguishing between elites and masses. For purposes of this paper, I treat Pluralism and liberal democracy as roughly equivalent.

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